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GENERAL DEBATE

Letter dated 30 September 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach the text of the communication from this Mission relating to the reply by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations, circulated on 30 September 1997, to the statement delivered by the President of Bolivia during the general debate.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 9.

(Signed) Marco A. VIDAURRE
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Letter dated 30 September 1997 from the Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the United Nations

With reference to the reply by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations (A/52/409, annex), the Permanent Mission of Bolivia has the honour to provide the following clarifications so that the General Assembly will possess the necessary information to judge objectively the content of the assertions made by the President of Bolivia on 29 September 1997 in his statement in the general debate at the fifty-second regular session.

It was not our intention to refer again to the two issues that led to the reply from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations. Nevertheless, given its content and the assertions made in it, it is important to reiterate the following explanations.

There can be no question of minimizing the justified alarm caused by the existence of minefields on the common frontier between Bolivia and Chile, laid by the authorities of the latter country, still less of depicting that concern as out of place or in the wrong context. What is evident, despite the treaties and agreements invoked by Chile, is that hundreds of thousands of landmines have transformed a vast border area into a zone of threat and risk to the lives of the civilian population. Bolivia will not resign itself to this situation, and is not in agreement with vague declarations of a possible and far-off withdrawal of these weapons of war, but will call for real decisions that demonstrate a genuine will to contribute, through the immediate withdrawal of these weapons, to establishing on the common border between Bolivia and Chile an area of peace and integration.

We reiterate our conviction that minefields are a breach of international humanitarian law and the ugly legacy of past epochs of confrontation and distrust that are out of place on the threshold of the new millennium.

With regard to the vital need to put an end to the landlocked situation that was imposed on Bolivia, we strongly reaffirm our irrevocable historical decision to continue making this demand with all the force it deserves. In our view, international treaties become truly legitimate when efforts are not made, through them, to perpetuate situations of injustice and deprivation for peoples or causes of dependence. No treaty is morally legitimate when its purpose is to enshrine injustice.

With this statement indicating Bolivia's position on both subjects, we do not believe that there is any need to return in this Assembly to these matters, of the validity of which the international community represented in the highest world body is fully aware.